

*In this journal entry I discussed briefly the feelings B and I had at this point. I would like to elaborate on those feelings and set the mood for this part of my journal. I hope I can successfully convey our exact thoughts and feelings as we contemplated our next move. If not I'm afraid we will appear to the average reader as being ignorant, naive, or downright foolish.*

This cave represented to us the culmination of weeks of hard work, complete with an array of emotions. From fatigue to fear. Anticipation to pain. From frustration to glory. To us we were not standing on the brink of possible destruction, but rather honoring an unspoken commitment. Much like a parent of a wayward child. We were not about to abandon our "child" out of fear of the unknown. Like it or not this cave had become a part of us. And now we must see this adventure to its fruition. Additionally, verbose explanations aside, we were being eaten alive with curiosity! Despite the overwhelming number of unexplained occurrences we experienced, we HAD to go back into this cave. What was making the rumbling noise? What caused the change in wind strength? etc, etc, all the way down to Joe. What could have possibly happened to him? What did he see? Or experience? We had many lengthy discussions about what our next move would be. We kept coming to the same conclusion: We had to return to the cave. We could offer no possible scenarios that would solve the many riddles held deep within the cave. The only way we could hope to complete the puzzle would be to conquer the cave. We were going back to Mystery Cave.

*Two weeks after our trip with Joe and we were on our way back to the cave. To prepare for this trip we contacted the local cave rescue group and got permission to borrow their low voltage two-way phone. The phone consists of two transceivers and a long spool of thin wire. I would then be able to unwind the wire as I went into the passage and stay in contact with B the entire time. We also thought it would be a good idea to take a video camera into the new passage. I purchased a case that would protect my video camera from dust, as well as sharp rocks. I was more than willing to pay the cost of the case just to make sure B got to see the entire passage.*

My head was doing fine. I still had a light red line to mark the spot where I tried to break the rock with my head. I never went to a doctor, but it was a very painful experience. I have thought about what would have happened if I had been able to go in the passage with Joe. He was a changed man after he came out. I have been calling his house nearly every day trying to talk to him, but he won't answer his phone. B called his work and a mutual friend told him that Joe called in sick two weeks ago and hasn't been in since. He said Joe warned his boss he might be out for a while. I even stopped by his house twice. The first time it looked like someone was home, but no one answered the door. The second time his car was gone and there were no lights on. I hoped to talk to him before this trip, but it didn't work out.

As we were rigging up the rope to descend into the cave I felt something for the first time. I DID NOT WANT TO GO INTO THE CAVE! It was not a feeling of foreboding. I was not receiving some premonition. I just had no desire to enter the underground world of Mystery Cave. I didn't share this feeling with B at that time. Even though I had no desire to go into the cave, I knew we HAD to. So I double checked my gear, and slipped over the edge of the cliff.

Right from the beginning it seemed like the cave did not want us to be there. Nothing went smoothly. Every time we tried to clip a carabiner or tie a knot or attach something to the rope we had to do it two or three times to get it right. Fortunately we recognized this and made sure everything was safe and secure. As we slowly made our way down we were continually bumping into the side of the cave, or stumbling as we walked, or dropping things. We finally reached a point where we stopped to gather ourselves before continuing. Our load was relatively light but we were taking forever to get to the hole. Finally we made it.

We checked the camera and phone to make sure they survived the trip. We tested everything and I gathered the gear I wanted to take into the passage. Then it was time. We looked at each other, but said nothing. Then I turned to face the passage. As I twisted

my body to begin entering the Tomb I desperately hoped it would be the last time I would contort my body to enter this claustrophobes nightmare.

The trip through Floyd's Tomb went smoothly, figuratively speaking. After I got through we took several minutes to get everything passed through to me. I got suited up and tested all the equipment. The phone worked like a charm. I video taped the squeeze, and then the first section of the new passage. Since I would be unable to tape while I crawled my plan was to crawl to the next section then stop and film some more. I could video what I had just been through and then video what I was going to crawl through next. That way I could get each section from both ends. I was starting to feel pretty good about the trip. I felt a sense of personal satisfaction at being able to provide a way for B to see the fruits of his labor. It was awkward lugging the camera and unrolling the phone wire while trying to crawl. I knew it would be worth it, though.

The small formations were too small to show up on the video. With normal outside lighting it would be no problem but with my headlight as the only source of light they effort was futile. The crystal formations turned out quite nice. They were easily large enough and made for some pretty good footage. I took advantage of the film stop to check the phone. It was comforting to hear someone's voice deep within the passage. We chatted briefly then I unplugged the phone and prepared to continue. The phone resembled an oversized regular phone. More like the ones you would see in war movies. When I wanted to talk to B I would just plug the phone into a special jack on the spool of wire. The power source was on B's end of the phone so it was always turned on. The reception was as clear as a normal phone. I continued forward.

Even though progress was slow it was steady. Things were going pretty good until I reached the round rock. Once again I got a strange feeling, just like the last time. I looked around carefully but saw nothing to be alarmed about. I proceeded to film the entire room. I got good shots of the round rock from all angles. I

got the walls, ceiling, and floor to the best of my ability. I even got some pretty good tape of the figure on the wall. It was difficult to make out exactly what it was on the video, but you could definitely tell something was there. After I taped everything to my satisfaction I moved toward the end of the room to prepare to explore new territory.

At the far end of the large room was a passage that led to darkness. The entrance was about a foot lower than my head and it looked liked it continued at that height for as far back as I could see. I ducked under the ceiling and prepared to see new sights. The walls of the new passage were darker than the rest of the cave to this point. The floor was made up of the same type of broken rocks. The ceiling had the same type of near-perfect arch as in the old section of Mystery Cave. It almost seemed out of place in the jagged atmosphere of a cave. I could only see back about 30 feet or so where the passage appeared to make a right hand turn. I thought this would be a good place to check in with B.

It took a couple of beeps before he answered the phone, but once he did his voice was still crystal clear. It sounded like he might have been snoozing. (Had I been gone that long?) He said he was doing fine and that I could take as much time as I needed. I thanked him and hung up. His patience has been wonderful during this whole project. He has spent a lot of time just waiting for me while I explore the passage. I was glad he was still willing to sit and wait. I hung up the phone and started to film the new passage, then it happened...

From behind me I heard the scraping noise. It was loud. It was close! It was coming from the large room I had just left! I wheeled around to face what ever had made that noise. When I did I lost my presence of mind and stood up at the same time. Crunch! My helmet crashed into the passage ceiling. My light broke and I was buried in the heavy darkness. Pain shot through my neck and down into my back. The helmet had protected my head but my neck was nearly numb from the impact. Fear enveloped me and my knee's began to weaken. I slowly and involuntarily slumped to my knee's. I gently set the camera down as I began to see stars

from the pain in my upper back. The scraping noise lasted only a second and now the only sound I could hear was my own panic-inspired breathing. Not only could I feel the fear thick upon my chest but the darkness seemed to hold me in place. I felt like I was vulnerable from every direction. I wanted to turn and look behind me, and to the side of me, and in front of me. Everywhere I looked I saw black. Finally I broke the stupor of terror long enough to reach for an alternate light source, the mini-mag on my helmet. I twisted the light to turn it on, and when I did I nearly cried! I had forgot to put fresh batteries in and now I could barely see more than a few feet. Still, it was better than nothing. I immediately began shining the light with all my might into the large room. I strained to get a glimpse of any movement in the room. Nothing.

I was shaking violently as I sat there trying to figure out what to do. My mind was not thinking clearly. I honestly thought I was going to die right there in the cave. For a fleeting moment I wondered how B would ever figure out what had happened to me. Then it hit me like a boulder: THE PHONE! My mind must have been clearing up at that point because I also thought about my glo-sticks. Without taking my eyes off the large room I felt around in my pack for the glo-sticks. Since I was carrying the phone and video camera I removed as much as possible from my pack and one of the things I left with B was my backup headlamp. Thus I was left with only the glo-sticks. I found one and ripped it out of the package. I could tell something was wrong by how it sounded. It has been inadvertently broken and was now useless. I chucked it on the ground and searched my pack for another one. I took my eyes off the large room only to check the passage behind me occasionally. I found another glo-stick broke it to light it up. The soft green glow created eerie colors on the walls of the cave. The stick provides barely enough light to see the immediate area, and provided no hint of what lie ahead. I felt the pack for one more light, again without taking my eyes off the room. I felt a third glo-stick and ripped it out of the package. After breaking it to make sure it worked I hesitated, then threw the glo-stick into the large room.

The throw was a perfect one and the stick sailed through the length of the room. In the brief moment that the light traveled through the room I saw nothing but cave walls. The absence of anything unusual did nothing to ease my state of panic. At the far end of the room I got a brief glimpse of the round rock as the light bounced on it. Then the light went behind the rock and seemed to disappear. I was still shaking, but at least I didn't see anything. Still, there was the noise...

I used the glo-stick to light the phone real and with fumbling fingers I managed to plug my phone into the jack. I put the phone to my ear and heard... NOTHING! The usual beeps to indicate connection with the other phone were not there. Terrified I pulled the phone from the jack and re-inserted it. Again, silence. The line was dead. What could have happened?! I JUST talked to B! I found myself nearly sobbing with fear. I knew the only way out of here was back the way I came. But SOMETHING was there! A third attempt at making contact with B met with the same results. I tried to think of another plan, but I could only focus on the memories of the grinding sound that I had heard. In my weakened state I slumped against the side of passage, breathing like I had just finished a race, never breaking eye contact with the shadows of the large room. As my shoulder touched the wall I had a powerful jolt of pain remind me of my collision with the roof of the cave. Despair, agony, terror.

I can't say exactly how long I sat there, but my feet were tingling and my knees were sore. The pain in my back crept lower, although my neck felt no different. I resolved to make an attempt to exit this evil passage. I knew if I waited too long I would loose what little light I had. I attempted to stand, but did not have the strength. I crawled slowly to the near end of the large room, dragging my pack beside me. Using the walls of the cave I was able to slowly stand, though not strait due to my sore back. Still breathing rapidly I slowly advanced through the room. I wound up the phone wire as I went. My eyes were staring straight ahead, straining for any signs of movement. With every step my light would cast ever changing shadows on the wall, keeping me busy trying to look at every one. My eyes burned as I realized I had not

blinked for many minutes. How many? How long had this been going on? The only sounds I could hear were the crunch of my feet on the broken rock, and the wheezing of my breath. As I wound the cord I could hear the squeak of the wheel, with each turn bringing me closer to the Tomb. Closer to B. Closer to safety.

The short trip through the room took an eternity. As I passed the crude drawing it seemed to glow, as if offering some sort of warning. I didn't know what the drawing represented, but everything about this cave seemed to instill fear. Toward the far end of the room I could see the round rock dimly at the far reaches of my light. Something seemed different about it, but I couldn't tell what. When I got within a few feet I could finally tell what had changed. It had moved! THAT was the sound I heard. Again terror gripped my entire body as I realized how close I was to... something! I had no choice but to continue. Still, it was not easy. I inched toward the rock, holding the glo-stick ahead of me in my shaking hand, using it to pierce the darkness. I stopped just this side of the rock and wound up the slack in the phone wire. Then I realized why I had lost contact with B. The rock was now sitting on the wire! I gave it a tug and the thin wire snapped. My only hope of contact with the outside world ceased to exist when that wire broke. I had never felt so alone and helpless. Buried deep within the earth. I had voluntarily descended into my own grave, with a casket of solid rock.

With the phone now useless I set it down in the passage. My gaze fixed on the round rock, I proceeded forward. My breathing was rapid, with my throat dry and aching and my mouth dusty. With every crunch of the rock below my feet my heart seemed to stop. No movement could be seen in the green glow of my stick. I got to the rock and peered over the top. Seeing nothing I took several rapid steps past it. When I reached the other side I recoiled in horror at what I saw. In the side of the passage near the floor was a hole, with another passage revealed. It had been covered by the rock! BUT NOW IT WAS EXPOSED! The rock could not have moved by itself.

I backed away from the hole and collided with the opposite wall. I

had not been paying attention to the pain in my back, but now it came back to me in all its fury. I stared down the newly discovered passage. It went down at a 45 degree angle and continued straight for as far as I could see. Several feet down I could see the glo-stick that I had thrown. It illuminated the passage enough that I could tell the walls were fairly smooth. The floor seemed to be the same way, unlike the rest of the cave. The passage was about 3 feet in diameter as far as I could see. It would have been an easy passage to explore, if I had the least desire to do so. Right now I wanted out of the cave and into daylight. I slowly backed away from the hole toward B. I never took my eyes off the abyss. I nearly tripped over the phone wire as I turned to leave this devils lair. I noticed my mini-mag was practically dead, leaving me only with the glo-stick. I wanted to sprint to Floyd's Tomb. Just hearing another human being would help alleviate some of the fear I was experiencing.

As I turned away from the large rock and the hole, I felt an overwhelming sense of panic fill my soul. It felt like a legion of demons was about to attack me from behind. I felt like my salvation lie ahead of me in the darkness, and Lucifer was behind me, trying to keep me from safety. I found myself moving much faster than I should have been in that cave. My only thought was to get out as quickly as possible. I passed the crystal formation, barely even noticing this beautiful creation of nature in the green glow of my light. Every time I ducked to avoid a rock I felt my back scream it's reminder of my injury. When I got to the point in the passage where I had to crawl I flung myself down on all fours, barely slowing down as I dropped. When my hands came in contact with the cave floor I felt an electric shock shoot all the way down my back, and simultaneously down my arms. For the first time since this nightmare had begun I let out a scream. I crumpled down and lay there on the rock, with new levels of pain manifesting every time I inhaled. Whimpering from fear and pain I tried to listen to any other noise in the cave. I could feel the silence pounding in my head. I knew from previous trips that B was still out of ear shot. But I was close.

Forcing myself to move I winced as I pulled my body onto all fours

and started to progress along the cave. I still held the glo-stick in my hand, but I had ceased checking behind me. Now my focus was ahead of me. I reached the point where I could yell to B, but I didn't make a sound. I didn't want to stop long enough to talk. Finally I reached the last stretch of cave before the squeeze. As I was crawling toward the beginning of the Tomb I called to B. He answered back. I screamed to him to get everything ready to go. He asked if I was O.K. (since he hadn't heard from me on the phone he had gotten worried). I told him no, and to get everything ready to go. When I reached the rope I flipped off my helmet and shoved it into my pack. For the first time I realized, I HAD FORGOT MY VIDEO CAMERA! It was a fleeting thought. I cared no more about that camera than a passenger of the Titanic cared about a hat or a coat. I tied the pack to the rope and told him to pull it through. Then I told him to start heading toward the surface as soon as he pulled the rope through. He asked why and I screamed that there was something in the cave with us.

My back ached with every move I made. I knew it didn't matter, though. I was going to get through the Tomb as fast as I could, injuries notwithstanding. Just as I started into the squeeze I felt the wind in the passage increase, and with it the most nauseating stench I have ever experienced. It smelled like damp, rotting, rancid, putrid, DEATH. I almost started to dry-heave. I pulled my shirt up over my nose to shield me from the over-powering smell. At this point B smelled it too. He yelled, "WHAT is THAT?". Then he yelled at me to hurry up and get through. I told him I was coming, then I took a deep breath through my shirt, and started back through. B's yelling had intensified my fear and panic, as if I needed any help. I knew he could sense the urgency in getting out of this place. Still, as I worked my way through I yelled at him to start up, that I would catch up with him when I got through. He said he would. He placed my glo-stick inside the passage, then began to climb out.

This time through the squeeze I had no regard for the tightness of the passage. I was scraping my face, ears, arms and shoulders. Every inch of the squeeze meant numerous scratches on my body, but I barely noticed them. My back was nearly paralyzing

me with pain. Once again I felt the rising need to vomit because of the odor being delivered to my nostrils by the breeze. Halfway through Floyd's Tomb I took a break to catch my breath. I was approaching exhaustion and my respiration rate was through the roof. The top of the passage seemed to rest my cheek, and the floor felt like broken glass on my opposite cheek. As I paused briefly to recuperate I heard the scraping noise coming from deep within the cave! It continued for several seconds, then silence. I let out a cry which startled me. I was no longer consciously reacting to the noise. The cry was a subconscious response to the fear which flowed through my entire body. In a panic I began to scoot through the passage. As I reached the largest part of the Tomb I quickly slid my arms under my body to get into position to exit through our hole. I grabbed the rope and pulled with all my might. When my shoulders reached the hole they lodged, and I was stuck! I dug my feet into the rocks and wiggled my way back into the passage. Then I turned my body slightly and tried again. This time I was successful in pulling my upper body through. Normally I would carefully work my way out, since there is a 3 foot drop on the outside of the hole. This time I kicked with my legs and pulled with my arms and PLOP, I dropped out of the Tomb, right onto my shoulder. I tried to roll to soften the impact, but was unable to do anything more than take the blow. Strangely the pain was focused on my shoulder, apparently not affecting my already sore back.

I rolled over onto all fours, then slowly rose to my feet. The smell was much less intense outside of the passage. I grabbed the glo-stick and used it to find my helmet. I began to head for the webbing to climb up while strapping on my helmet. When I got to the webbing I reached up to grab hold and recoiled in horror. In the glow of the glo-stick I could see for the first time the injuries to my arms. My forearms were covered with deep cuts and scrapes. Much of my arm was covered with blood. The wounds were not deep enough to bleed freely, but rather ooze the blood. In that brief moment that I stopped I noticed that there was silence in the cave. No sounds coming from the passage and nothing from up ahead. Once again the feeling of being alone returned, motivating me to proceed. Climbing up the little drop-off

proved to be difficult in my condition. Having the glo-stick as the only light source added to the challenge. Once on top I scrambled to catch up with B. I was impressed with the speed of his ascent.

*Although I did not mention any more of my physical condition during my exit, I was hurting! With every step I took pain shot through my lower back and my neck. My arms were shredded and my shoulder had a nice gash in it. I honestly believe that were it not for the terror I felt at the time I would not have the energy and the motivation to climb out. I was running on pure adrenaline. Unfortunately the adrenaline surge was about to end.*

*I did not see or hear B until I reached the small area at the bottom of the drop. He was on rope and climbing out as fast as he could. I could hear him moving quickly and breathing heavily. I called out to him and his startled reaction told me he was nearly as tense as I was. He told me to get on rope and start climbing. We both knew that would be dangerous and not something we would ever normally do, but this was different. I stood there looking up at where the rope disappeared into the darkness above me. It danced around as B made his way to safety. He was out of sight but I knew he was close. I knew the rope was my lifeline to the outside. To light, safety. Behind me was darkness, fear, the unknown. I had the fleeting thought of a movie scene where the actor had outwitted the monster and had reached the front door of the haunted house. Just as he reaches for the knob he hears a sound behind him and turns, only to see...*

I slid the glo-stick into the cord on my helmet and reached for my harness. Then I thought I would let B get a little bit higher while I pulled the rope up that was stretched down into the cave. That would make it easier to get out once we got to the top of the drop. I chose not to wind the rope around my arm, since it was sore and bleeding, so I just pulled it into a pile on the floor. From above I heard B warn me, "rock", and I ducked under the ledge as several small rocks landed on the floor near my feet. I quickly went back to pulling the rope in. I had about half of it in, about 50 feet, when the rope hit a snag. UGH! It was solid. There was no way I was going to crawl back in to release it so I decided to just

forget the rope and get my harness on and get out of the cave. I quickly threw the harness around me and started to buckle it. Before I could secure it I heard a strange noise at my feet. My pulse began to quicken. I looked down at the rope only to discover to my horror that the rope was disappearing down into the darkness. SOMETHING WAS PULLING THE ROPE BACK INTO THE CAVE!!!

I let go of the harness and began clawing my way up the rope. The unbuckled harness fell to the floor. Fortunately I held on to an ascender. At the moment I could not think strait and began climbing out of the cave without being attached to the rope. I had climbed out many times without using an ascending device, but I was always attached to the rope, just in case.

*I was climbing as fast as my battered body could haul me up. I was in a near panic state again and consequently was scraping, bumping, and gouging my arms and legs. As I climbed I screamed to B that something was pulling the rope. He yelled back to hurry up. Luck was with me in that I didn't slip and fall back down into the hole. If I had I would have bounced several times against the sides of the cave before smashing onto the floor. The injuries would be fatal. Without the necessity of having to stop to slide the ascender up the rope I made excellent time getting up. I could see rays of light above me, coming from the entrance to the cave. That told me exactly where I was in the cave.*

I caught up to B on the "ledge" below where our re-belay point was fixed. I told him to keep going. It would only take him a few minutes, but every second would be torture, because I had to wait for him to get up. I watched the rope that we had just climbed up. I expected to see some creature from deep within the earth climb up and make me it's lunch. The rope moved around a bit, in rhythm with B's climbing, but did not appear to have any tension on it. As I stood there waiting for B I kept watching the rope for signs of anything bizarre. I didn't know if my heart could take any more stress. I could not have been more wired. I tried to relax a bit to make sure I was thinking rationally, but my poor brain had reached sensory overload. As B reached the top of the last climb I

got ready to clip on my ascender and get my sorry butt out of there. It was then that I noticed that the rope began to tighten from below. I could feel the tension on the rope, but it was a steady tension, not like someone was climbing up. Either way I wanted out of there as fast as possible. I clipped on and scrambled up the rope. I hadn't noticed but B had kept on moving toward the entrance. I got up the last few feet in a hurry. I just unclipped and kept on moving, leaving the rope behind.

By the time I got to the entrance of the cave, and daylight, B was almost up to where the rope was anchored. I wanted to get up so bad I almost started to free climb, without clipping on to the rope. I could see B was almost up, so I clipped on and started up. I almost didn't make it up. I had just started up when I nearly collapsed from exhaustion. I managed to recover enough to pull myself up the last few feet. As I climbed I could hear the tension on the rope manifest itself by the stretching noise in the rope. I prayed the rope would not break with me attached to it. The second that I reached the top I unclipped the ascender. I could see B kneeling down by the tree, so I limped over to him and collapsed. For the first time since I went through Floyd's Tomb we could see each other. We just stared. I knew I looked pretty bad, but didn't know that B was in such bad shape. He had cuts and scrapes on every exposed surface of his body. His face was pale, almost white. His mouth and his eyes were wide open. He was breathing heavily. Almost gasping. The shock we shared at the other persons appearance was broken when we heard the rope around the tree stretch and the knot B had tied tighten. I was frozen in place. Overwhelmed with fright. B seemed to be transfixed on the knot. Then in one motion he produced a pocket knife and began to work on the rope.

It is amazing how a persons state of mind can alter the perception of time. I'm sure it only took 4 or 5 seconds to sever the rope from the tree, but it seemed like an hour. When the rope was cut, the knot fell to the ground, while the end of the rope zipped across the rocks and over the edge of the cliff, the speed of it causing a humming noise as it went. As soon as the rope was cut, B let out a cry. He dropped the knife and fell backward. Watching

the rope fly over the edge brought the feelings in the passage back to me. I got up and headed toward the truck. I noticed B was still laying there, wide eyed, staring at the point the rope disappeared. I called to him, which seemed to break his trance. He got up and hurried away from the tree, the cave, the nightmare. Neither of us said a word all the way home.

*It is now 4 days after our trip to the cave. It has taken me 4 days and dozens of attempts to get this entire experience written into my journal. Every time I started to write I recalled the terrible feelings I had and couldn't write anymore. I felt compelled to continue, so as to document the unbelievable events while all of the details were fresh in my mind. I can still feel the pain. Still smell the stench. Still experience the terror. Even typing from my journal has taken hours. I would like to write more, but it will have to wait. Even now, with several days between me and the event, I can't relax. I can barely concentrate. That's all for now.*